

VZCZCXRO3044
OO RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #2203 2911338
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 181338Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1206
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 8085
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS ABUJA 002203

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA'S LEADERSHIP INCUBATOR FALLS ON HARD TIMES

¶1. (U) Summary: Nigeria's National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) has produced three former Nigerian rulers, and scores of ministers, flag-grade officers, and high-level civil servants. Described in past USG reporting as the "cradle of the elite of the elite," NIPSS has played a key policy planning and advisory role over its 28-year existence; recent evidence, however, shows an institution whose influence is in decline. END SUMMARY.

Nigeria's "High-Level Center for Reflection"

¶2. (U) Located in a pleasant rural setting with on-campus bungalow housing for its students, NIPSS was created after the end of the Nigerian civil war as a way to offer policy recommendations via a more deliberative, academic process. Created and funded by the President's Office, the Institute reports directly to him and each year presents the Executive with a substantive paper containing specific policy recommendations. Its main program, however, is a ten-month course of study that includes public speaking training, group research projects, domestic and foreign travel, and a final policy-oriented thesis paper. Enrolling 60 students from the upper levels of the military, Federal civil service, and state governments, it is envisioned as "the nation's foremost policy think tank" and alumni are privileged to use the honorific "MNI" (Member of the National Institute) after their names for life.

¶3. (U) Per former NIPSS director and current enrollee Dr. Sokoto Mohammed, a NIPSS course is one of the required routes for military personnel to reach general/flag rank, with Nigeria's War College or a foreign equivalent being equally acceptable. NIPSS has produced a long list of Nigerian political notables, including at least three former heads of state (Babangida, Abacha, and Abubakar), as well as key advisors, senators, ministers, and local leaders (including the Sultan of Sokoto, scheduled to meet with U/S Hughes in early November, Acting Inspector General of Police Mike Okiro, and the Secretary General of the Nigerian Labor Congress, John Odah). Obasanjo supported it to the extent that there is a plaque at the entrance honoring him, and the library complex has been named after him (no other former heads of state have been so honored).

A School in Decline

¶4. (SBU) Despite an illustrious list of alumni, evidence shows an organization losing its ability to shape Nigerian government policy. The NIPSS website (<http://nipsskuru.org>)

frankly admits that it "has not lived up to the high expectations of its founding fathers", and, when asked which of NIPSS' recent policy recommendations have been implemented, Mohammed was only able to lamely offer some vague mention of "ecological" ones. While Obasanjo may have increased the school's budget (and its former director, General Garba, was part of the Obasanjo patronage network), he also used the school as a place to get out-of-favor officers out of the way (e.g. Chief of Army Staff General Ajibade in May 2003). In addition, both under Obasanjo and Yar'Adua, fewer of Nigeria's power elite seem to be "MNIs" and more are products of foreign universities, Nigeria's War College, and U.S., Indian, and European training.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: Like many other things in Nigeria, NIPSS' future fortunes depend entirely on its ability to curry favor and patronage from the right people. Dr. Mohammed admits that President Yar'Adua's disposition toward it is still unknown. Capital upgrades from Obasanjo's largesse may have improved NIPSS' library and on-campus housing, but it's possible that TOO close of an association with the former President may mean marginalization under the new administration. Despite a good curriculum, NIPSS may become the realm of the have-beens, the almost-weres, and the mid-grade civil servant.
PIASCIK